

CS: This is Constance Standley interviewing Dale Robert Standley at his home on May 1, 2007 at 4:45 pm.

CS: Let's start off by talking about when and where you were born.

DS: Well, I was born October the 21st 1925 in Waitsburg, Washington. I was born at home right on the main street of Waitsburg. [laughs]

CS: And where did you grow up at?

DS: Well, it seems like my dad had so many jobs and we moved around a lot. Part of the time we were in Seattle and he worked at Elbers milling company. And part of the time we were in Waitsburg and he worked for a wheat rancher. He also had a job working for Bell Telephone in the Waitsburg/Dayton area where he was a roaming maintenance man for the company. He climbed poles, he put in stub poles...like when a pole was starting to rot off at the bottom, he would put a stub in and bind it to the old pole [laughs]; he used to do a lot of that. The old phones at that time were crank [phones], they had a crank on 'em and you cranked it up and it would ring into central and the makeup boxes, like where they spliced in the wire. The wire was all in wooden Bell containers. I remember one time when dad was climbing a pole and he was trouble shooting – their system wasn't working – and he went up there and it was full of bees [laughs]; he came down pretty fast. He [just] opened up the box and there they were, a big hive of bees in[side].

CS: What were your parents' names?

DS: Dad's name was Dick Standley. Actually, it was R.H. Standley – Richard Harold. And mother's name was Amy.

CS: And what was your childhood like?

DS: Well, I can't remember too much before about 4 years old, but I think we were living in a home in White Center around that time. When I started school we were living up on Beacon Hill; I can't remember the name of that grade school, but it was [really] close to Cleveland High School. One of the things that comes to mind that was kind of funny [laughs] when I started in the first grade there, my mom signed me in [for] the first day, but I beat her back home. [Laughs] I wasn't going to go for that at all but she finally convinced me that I had to go to school. [Laughs]. And then from there [...] we moved back to Waitsburg and I was in the second grade [there]. I had a lot of friends and we spent all [our] time going off to the golf course and finding golf balls and stuff like that. [Laughs]. On the wheat ranch we used to shock wheat and mind the binders and oats and stuff like that to feed the horses, you know?

CS: Did you have a lot of chores on the wheat fields? Chores that you had to do or were responsible for everyday? Like feeding the horses?

DS: Well, actually, we really didn't live right on the farm. We lived in a home that was probably a half a mile or so over to the main buildings, you know, where the barns were.

CS: Where was your mother?

DS: Well, I was ten years old when mother got pneumonia. She was about ready to have my younger brother Ted and she got pneumonia, went to the hospital and passed away. And that was that.

CS: Was your younger brother okay?

DS: Yea, they saved him and one of my aunts took care of him for a while; one of my mother's sisters.

CS: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

DS: I had one brother and one sister. And I also had a half-brother from a later marriage of my dad's...my stepmother and dad's.

CS: How soon did your dad get remarried?

DS: [...] Ted was ten years younger than me and he was born in '35. [...] April the 13th. It had to be about five years after that that my dad got married the second time [to a woman named Lyona].

CS: Did you and your siblings get along well with her [your dad's new wife]?

DS: Ya, we got along pretty good, we really did and there was a stepbrother and two stepsisters. [...]

CS: Did you know your grandparents?

DS: Oh, yeah.

CS: What were their names?

DS: Andrew was my grand[father] on my dad's side and the grandmother, well he was divorced from my grandmother at that time, but [her name was] Edith. I lived with her for a while after mother died, in Arlington, Washington in an old schoolhouse that had been converted [in] to [a house to] live in. It was up by Lake Riley, North of Arlington.

CS: How long did you live with your grandmother?

DS: I think I was probably up there about 3 years and I also spent some time with an aunt and uncle up in New Halen, Washington after my mother died. My sister and brother were both either with an aunt or...I was the only one that stayed up in Arlington of the three of us.

When I lived with my grandmother Edith, her husband (after she had divorced) had come back from the war [WWI] and had shell shock when he came back from the

service. He was quite an ornery man; he would get real belligerent when he'd go out and get to drinkin'. When he'd get to drinkin', he [always] had too much to drink, and he'd start living the war all over again. He was bald headed and just around his head [outside of] his helmet, he had hair but up where his steel helmet had been, the mustard gas got up there [during the war] and cooked the follicles in his hair and it all fell out. Henry had a piece of metal in his skull and it grew gristle over it, [which became] a lump about that high [measures about two inches] sticking out of his head. [Laughs] [Because of everything that he went through in the war] he got real ornery when he was drinking. Grandma and I had to leave one time cause he was getting the gun out, so we bailed out of there. The next morning he came looking for us up at the neighbors, where we had gone and stayed. Everything got ironed out though.

The grandparents on this grandmother's side were Wrights. I only remember him [great-grandpa] one time and I don't remember her [great-grandma] at all because I was pretty young when we went down there and visited them [in Medford, Oregon]. What really impressed me, [...] was [that he was] hard of hearing, and he had a hearing aid that was a big horn like thing; it had a deal about that big around [holds hands in a big circle] and then it come up kinda like an instrument [saxophone] – that he would hold in his ear, and that's how we had to talk to him. It was an early hearing aid. He lived awful close to a railroad track down there in Medford, and then one day he went out walkin' down the railroad track and didn't hear the train comin' and he died; they had to pick him up in a bucket. Yep, that's what happened to him. That great-grandmother, I can't remember her for some reason or another; I was too young, I guess. I think he must've got all my attention because of that horn. [Laughs] I can remember that so plain.

Then [there was] Grandpa Miller [great-grandfather on father's side] he had one of those old pipes, with the bent stem; it wasn't a straight one, it was a curved one, you know? And he was always suckin' away on that and then he'd startin' tellin' you some windy thing he did when he was younger and he'd suck away on that there pipe – 3 or 4 puffs and then he'd say something and then when he had to do some thinkin' about what he was gonna say next, well he'd puff away on the pipe again. I always figured it was all a pack of hot heat. [Laughs]

CS: What did your grandparents do for a living?

DS: My grandfather, Andrew, was a rancher; that was about all that he did was work on ranches and stuff. He was also a fiddler. He played the fiddle and he [would] call square dances and stuff like that, you know? He was a pretty talented old boy. [Smiles]

CS: Did you have any military ties in your family?

DS: My dad was [all] ready to go into World War I. In fact, he was in what would be like a training center or boot camp or whatever you want to call it. While he was there, the war [...] [ended] and, so, he went home [laughs]; they discharged him. He kind of escaped that. [Laughs]

CS: Was yours a patriotic home? Was the feeling in your home very patriotic about going to war and being in the military?

DS: There were no objections to it at all. It was just that at the time when they took him [my dad] in, when he was old enough to go in the service, time ran out because they signed the Armistice, you know? And it was the end of the war, World War I. I also had an uncle that was in World War I that was the youngest person in the United States Army; Uncle Ralph.

CS: How old was he?

DS: Well, he went in and lied about his age. He wasn't supposed to be in there, he was only 15 or something like that and, anyway, it turned out that there wasn't anybody in the army that was as young as him. [Laughs] No, that was Uncle Jack wasn't it? Ya, Jack Bell. I was getting my uncles mixed up [laughs].

CS: How old were you when you joined the Navy?

DS: I was 18. I was drafted and I volunteered for the 6-year hitch in the Navy.

CS: What made you decide to do that?

DS: I just wanted to stay in. I intended to stay in the service for at least 6 years. But [...] [gave us] a choice where if you just went in the reserves, I think it was a 2-year deal, they could actually keep you in longer.

CS: What did you think that the war [WWII] was about? How did the U.S. portray the war?

DS: Well, World War II was a war that started in Europe and we [America] got involved in it with the English [...] because of Hitler; the Germans did a lot of things that weren't legal...persecuting the Jews, trying to run over the countries and they ran into France and I don't remember how many different countries over there and then the Russians got involved in it. They [the Germans] attacked Russia too and we joined in with Russia and England and fought 'em all over the continent until we finally came out victorious [laughs]. That was supposed to be the end of all wars. [Sighs]

CS: Not quite, huh?

DS: Not quite. [Laughs]

CS: Where did you do your naval training?

DS: I went in the service and was sent over to Farragut, Idaho. There was a quite a little story about how that became a training center. Eleanor Roosevelt was flying across the country and she looked out the window of the aircraft and looked down there and seen that nice lake – Coeur d’Alene Lake and where Farragut, Idaho is and it looked like a real good spot for a Navy Base or training center and that’s how it came to be. [Laughs]

CS: And it became the biggest training center in the history of the U.S., right?

DS: Well, I’m not familiar with whether there was any training centers that were larger, but it was it was pretty huge. I can’t remember how many different companies there were over there, but there was a lot of ‘em. They had training centers on the East Coast, in the Great Lakes, down in San Diego and I’m really not sure where else.

CS: What was training like?

DS: Oh, it was pretty routine. There was some pretty bad weather, especially when I was over there with 20 degrees below zero and you’d get up in the morning and go out there and have to run across what they call the Grinder out there where they let people train and run and one thing or another and then we would go through the mess hall and all. [We] spent a lot of time in the barracks [...] [which] were all coal fired with boilers in ‘em and we had to stand watch and make sure that [...] the water and the coal and everything were fed in there properly to keep it warm. You didn’t dare go to sleep on the job because if the water got down to low it could blow the place up. [...] There were some situations where the firemen were laying there, going to sleep, and when they woke up they couldn’t see any water in the sight glass. They dumped that cold water in there on those red-hot coils, it made terrific steam pressure and it blew up. We had that happen a few times, so it was quite a little responsibility that they put on ya there. Course you

done your patrol duty just like ya would if you were under fire and that was pretty miserable, but it was just part of the training.

CS: What were your duties in the Navy?

DS: I was aboard the U.S.S. Hatfield – the DD-231. I was assigned to a ship, the U.S.S. Hatfield; the DD 231. I was assigned a bunk and had a footlocker that I could put all of my stuff in – a little compartment aboard ship. After you got up [in the morning], you fold your bunks up against the bulkhead and ate right there; you'd put down the chow table and some benches and ate right there in your room. There was no mess hall, not on the Destroyer, you ate right in your compartment. We had an After Deck House on the stern where they housed the washing facilities where you washed your clothes, took showers, etc. There was one guy, in particular, who was always spilling food down the white part of his blues¹; he'd just try to bleach it out, he wouldn't wash it. He was always running around [the ship] in his clothes that had old gravy spilt on 'em from days before and it was sour; it was just nasty. He never washed his clothes and didn't like to take showers; everybody wanted the showers, but he didn't believe in taking a bath. We took him back [one day] and took the kya brush to him in the showers; put him in there, clothes and all and then brushed him, washing his clothes right on his body. [Laughs] That straightened him out; he was a pretty good boy after that.

When I started out, I was just an apprentice seaman. When you [first] go aboard ship, everybody has to go through a period of what they call mess cooking or working out of the galley or helping the cook, all that kind of stuff. Anyway, I drew the job of working for the chiefs up in the chief's quarters – chief petty officers and before my time was up,

¹ Blues are the blue sailor's uniform.

the chief electrician asked me if I wanted to strike (apply) for electrician. Of course I jumped at the chance and soon made 3rd class. I did all the chores that were required – fixing vent sets, and changing light bulbs, and even going out on the yard arm and changing light bulbs and working on sound power telephone systems, and, of course, I ran the gyro compass², and the repeaters³ that go with it, and took care of all that stuff. I showed the movies – ran a 35 millimeter Devry projector.

I had to take care of all of the electrical motors, batteries, the gyro compass [...]and, in fact, I slept right in there with the Master Gyro in what they called the Gyro Cage. [...] There was a hum that was emitted from it [the gyro] when it was running; if that changed a little bit, I'd be awake in a second [laughs]. Because that was my duty, I had to get up and secure it because if the gyro started slowing down, it would start doing a lot of violent thrashing and it could actually come out of it's cage and go right through the ship. So, I had to be real careful there; keep it taken care of. I had to secure it a couple of times when we lost power. There were emergency batteries but the batteries would only hold up just a short time 'cause of the heavy draw on 'em and so it gave you time to get it [the gyro] secured and locked in so it wouldn't do it [break through the ship]. Then I had a duty where, under General Quarters, we had to go get on our battle stations and I was on a 5 inch, 50-caliber gun. I did the pointing – the part where you point the barrel up and down on the gun and there was a partner that sat on the other side of the gun that did the training – sideways moving it to get on target. You had to do all

² A gyro compass is electrically driven and aligned with the earth's axes so that it indicates true north. The main unit is mounted well down below decks from where repeaters are fed. The gyro must be adjusted for latitude and ship's speed. Ineffective in latitudes higher than 75 degrees. Information given by – <http://www.sdmaritime.com/contentpage.asp?ContentID=109>

³ A repeater is a device which propagates electrical signals from one cable to another. Information given by – <http://www.sdmaritime.com/contentpage.asp?ContentID=109>

this with a buzzer that let you know when the ship was on an even keel. When that buzzer went off, you had to have your target in your sites. That's what that was all about and you didn't have to worry about pulling the trigger, that was all done from the bridge. [My job was to] just keep it on the target.

CS: What was your title in the Navy?

DS: I was an Electrician Mate 2nd Class. The ship was designed as a destroyer and we had [...] sonar equipment aboard which would tell you what was down below, like to locate submarines and stuff like that. We had the radar, of course, which was pretty new at that time. We convoyed and lent protection for convoys; convoys are the troops. After Pearl Harbor, when those battlewagons were all busted up over there, we escorted some of the [them] back to Bremerton to go in the shipyard. They were just patched up enough so that we could get them back. It was mid-ocean where we rendezvoused with another group that had brought 'em that far and then we escorted them the [rest of the way] to Bremerton and made sure that there were no submarines in the area. I think the most memorable thing that I did in the Navy was when we went and escorted those battlewagons back from Pearl Harbor and the swells were so big out there that one minute you were up and looking down on those big battleships like they were down in a hole and the next, you went down in the low end and you looked up there and it was a mile up there to 'em; it really was impressive. And then we had to refuel out there. We had to run alongside of the carrier that was in the group, and we got fuel from them. They had to run the hoses across and cruise right beside 'em, within about 20 feet or so and maintain that, even in all the swells and everything; it worked out real good, it was amazing to watch. Ya. We shoot at a few aircraft that ventured too close that turned out

to be Japanese or somebody. We also had to drop a few Ash Cans on suspected submarines.

CS: Where all did your ship go?

DS: Well, we spent quite a bit of time working out of Port Angeles and we went on patrol right out there on [the] Pacific, off the coast; just trying to protect the straights and make sure that there were no foreign submarines [...]. We had a call where we had to go underway one night and go out off Cape **Lattery** where we located a sounding out there. We dropped a bunch of ash cans⁴ on 'em and we really didn't know whether we got the sub or not; but I'm sure we scared 'em off if we didn't.

[...] Shortly after that, we had to go into the shipyards in Bremerton and they did a big overhaul on the ship and converted it over to the AG 84; it was still the Hatfield, but they changed it from a destroyer to an auxiliary gunnery ship. They put a huge winch on the stern of the ship and we towed targets for the fleet. They would shoot at the targets and, one time, we'd probably been out there about a half a mile or more and they made a mistake out in the fog and mistook us for the target [laughs]. They would've likely sunk us but they had communications with high frequency – voice communication – and they got 'em stopped right away, but they got off a few rounds before [they stopped]. Shots were flyin' all over the ship. [Laughs]. And then one time we were out maneuvering with Navy fighters – torpedo planes – and they'd drop their torpedos and were s'posed to be set to go under the ship. You could see the wake of 'em and you would know whether there would've been a [accurate] hit or not. This particular torpedo malfunctioned; it went down, then all of a sudden it came up to the surface and was just about maybe 3 or 4 feet under the water. It hit the side of the ship and if it had been a live round, why we

⁴ Ash cans are bombs designed to shatter submerged submarines.

would have been blown clear out of the water. But it being just a practice one, it didn't have any charge in it, but it had enough momentum that it went right through the hull of the ship and into a fresh water tank. [...] We started noticing that we had salt water coming out of the drinkin' [water] and we went into the boilers. The drinking water was salty and the boilers were getting' it too; that's where they got the fresh water was through the boilers. So we had to go into the yards and have another repair and the torpedo was still stickin' into the ship when we went in there. [Laughs].

CS: Did you guys go anywhere overseas?

DS: No place that we landed at all. It was pretty much local operations; although we did go to San Diego for quite some time, throwing targets down there.

CS: You always hear of Navy sailors getting into trouble, did you get in a lot of trouble?

DS: [Laughs a lot] Oh yeah! . I got restricted to the ship one time when I went down to San Diego with some sailor friends and got loaded. We almost made it back across the Tijuana border, we were even waved ahead after a brief check, but this old car that we were driving had jagged iron fenders stickin' out and it caught a hold of a walking sailor's uniform and almost tore the whole thing off of him. [Laughs]. Next thing I knew, we were in the brigs; they decided we were too drunk to drive. We were then taken from there to the border, and then to the brig in San Diego. After sobering up 'til about 4 o'clock in the morning, they took us over to the ship and turned us over to the officer of the deck; we were written up and they took away a few of our liberties⁵. Other than losing those liberties, it really didn't affect me; I still ended up with an honorable discharge [laughs], that's all that matters I guess.

⁵ Liberties are privileges that sailors have to leave the ship, go on certain outings, etc. When liberties are taken away, sailors are usually grounded to the ship.

CS: Did you have any minorities on your ship?

DS: Oh, yeah. At that time, a colored person couldn't be anything but a steward's mate; there wasn't no choice for 'em except [that]. If any part of 'em were colored, they were classified as steward's mates; that was their duty. [...] I don't really remember whether we had any Mexican kids on board or not...I don't think so.

CS: What were the duties of the steward's mates?

DS: They were the ones that did all the servin' [of] food for the officers and took care of the officers quarters, ironed their clothes, grind their shoes, cooked their meals [laughs].

CS: Were there any problems between the other sailors and the minorities?

DS: No, no, they accepted what they had, you know, at that time. Though I think there was probably a lot of misgivings about it, you know, but there was never anything brought up about it. They had a chief steward's mate, which was the officer's head cook, that was really well respected aboard ship and he was a regular Joe Lewis. He'd get in all these fights and he'd take on everybody [laughs]. He was a good man.

CS: How were you treated by the Navy?

DS: Oh, real good. Ya, [...] [even] the skipper of the ship, treated me real well. In fact he had me over to his house in San Diego one weekend but he had a reason, though, he wanted me to work on his car. [Laughs].

CS: Were you treated differently on land then you were on the ship?

DS: Not really. Not really. There were no problems at all; you just do your job and [everything was fine].

CS: What was the pay like?

DS: It was really cheap in them days. I think it started out in boot camp, I got something like \$16 a month; just enough to buy some little items. In boot camp you only had 2 days the whole time we were there that we could go on liberty, so you really didn't need much money. But it really didn't increase much until I got a bigger, higher rate, you know? I can't remember what we were getting paid then, but it wasn't much [laughs].

CS: Did you make a lot of friends on the ship?

DS: Oh yeah! I had a lot of friends, but I lost track of 'em all though. I put my name back in on the ship's register, though. [...] [That way] it will be on there so that anybody that asks can get on the Internet and see my name in there and give me a call.

CS: What do you think were the benefits of being in the Navy?

DS: Well, definitely the training. It helped a lot towards the work that I've done over the years, especially the electrical business I ran in Sequim for about 11 years. I also worked for an electrical company; I worked for Star Rentals and worked out of the Hall – Local 46, the electrical union. That's where you go to get your jobs; they assign you to different companies that are looking for help, you know? I worked for Atlas Electric for a year or so and then we had the slowdown and [...] I got laid off there at Atlas – I was one of the last to go. They had to shut it down because there wasn't any work and so I started my mechanical business and I did a lot of work for Star Machinery; that's how I got started. Then I had a machine repair business for a number of years – worked for myself. Worked for the Clallam co-op up in Sequim; worked in the woods; worked on a tugboat; worked out of Lake Hoset logging.

CS: When and where did you meet your wife?

DS: Well, I was out on liberty one day and she was working there at Bruno's in Sequim, a little restaurant. She would work her lunch hour and during 3rd period study hall and then go back to school.

CS: You went in for lunch?

DS: Oh, I don't know. I think I was just out cruisin' around mostly [laughs] on liberty. Anyway, Jo and I started going out together.

CS: How long did you guys date before you were married?

DS: About a year and a half.

CS: What would you guys do on your dates?

DS: [Laughs] I don't know if that's appropriate for this. [Laughs more]. There wasn't much to do in Sequim; we went to the movies mostly.

CS: When were you married?

DS: [long pause] March 25, 1946 in San Diego.

CS: How many months in a typical year were you out at sea?

DS: I'd say probably about 3 or 4 months. We'd be on patrol and we had other ships that were in the same class that would relieve us. We operated right out of Port Angeles for a long time.

CS: How did your life change in the Navy once you were married?

DS: Oh, I can't think that it changed a heck of a lot. After we were married Jo was down in San Diego there for a while and then I sent her back home to my folk's place; she stayed with them until I got out. She took care of my little half brother that first year. She stayed with them until after Dale was born because she couldn't go home cause they

didn't have any Navy hospitals in Sequim and I'd of had to pay for it myself otherwise.

So they had a Navy hospital, up where Fircrest is now, so he was born in the Navy hospital.

CS: When was your first child born?

DS: That was Dale. September the 30th, 1946.

CS: Were you there when he was born?

DS: Oh no, I was down in San Diego. [Laughs]

CS: Was that hard being away while he was born?

DS: I called, and, my folks didn't have a phone because back then when you're out in the country, you had a hard time getting' a phone. So I called my Aunt Jo the very day Dale was born to see if anything had happened yet, and it just so happened that I called on the same day [he was born].

When I left to come home and see my new son, there wasn't any inkling that they were going to be getting under way and going anywhere. By the time I got home, one of the guys off the ship came knockin' at the door and he said that it was just a day or so after I left that they got the orders to come back to Seattle and I could've road the ship back, instead of taking the bus home.

CS: Once your first child was born did you want to stay in the Navy or were you more tempted to leave?

DS: [...] After he was born, the war was over, it terminated, and this thing came up out of the clear blue sky. I expected to stay in another 3 years, but this thing came up that said anybody that was a U.S.N.S.B., which meant selected volunteer, could get out of the

Navy if they chose and take an early dismissal. So, I took advantage of it because I wanted to come home and get a job and take care of my family.

CS: What did you do right after you left the Navy?

DS: I went to work for an uncle there for a while doing rockery work. And then from there, I went right to Bethlehem Steel. I worked there in the scrap yard in Bethlehem Steel just burnin' scrap and puttin' it in charging boxes and sending it into the mill and puttin' all different chemicals and ore and stuff in the charging boxes; I worked for them for quite a while. I also had a part-time job in a gas station; I pumped gas and did grease jobs and all that kind of stuff, and minor repairs – fuel pumps, and stuff, you know?

CS: Did you have a hard time adjusting to life outside the Navy when you got out?

DS: Not really, no. It wasn't that tough at all.

CS: Do you have any regrets about being in the Navy? If you had to do it all over again, would you?

DS: Well, there's not much chance of that. [Laughs] But, no, I kinda liked the Navy, I had a good time there. It was interesting, I learned a lot.

CS: I think that you have lived a really great and successful life, so if you could tell your grandkids and great-grandkids one thing about living a valuable life, what would it be?

DS: Well, I think that you should be real honest with everybody and try to live a decent life, that's the main thing. There's only one Man watching [points up].

CS: What do you think of the world now? Think it was worth fightin' for?

DS: Oh, ya. There's been a lot of changes since I was a kid. [...]